

What is claimed is:

1. A computer-implemented method for managing multiple contracts,
comprising:

receiving an inquiry;

5 determining a plurality of contracts that are implicated by said inquiry;

accessing information pertaining to said plurality of contracts, said information
comprising, for each of said plurality of contracts, a set of one or more associated
contract terms;

10 processing said information to select therefrom one or more applicable contract
terms that apply to said inquiry; and

processing said inquiry based, at least partially, upon said one or more applicable
contract terms.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein processing said information comprises:

15 processing each of said plurality of contracts in a particular order,

determining, as each contract is processed, whether that contract has a contract
term associated therewith which applies to said inquiry; and

upon finding a first contract term that applies to said inquiry, including said first
contract term as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

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3. The method of claim 1, wherein determining said plurality of contracts
comprises:

determining which particular contract is being invoked by said inquiry; and

determining at least one other contract that is related to said particular contract.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein said particular contract and said other contract are related to each other through a hierarchy.

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5. The method of claim 1, wherein processing said information comprises:
determining whether a set of contract terms associated with said particular contract comprises a contract term that applies to said inquiry; and

10 in response to a determination that the set of contract terms associated with said particular contract does not comprise a contract term that applies to said inquiry,
determining whether a set of contract terms associated with said other contract comprises a contract term that applies to said inquiry.

15 6. The method of claim 5, wherein processing said information further comprises:

in response to a determination that the set of contract terms associated with said particular contract does comprise a contract term that applies to said inquiry, including the contract term that applies to said inquiry as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

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7. The method of claim 5, wherein processing said information further comprises:

in response to a determination that the set of contract terms associated with said other contract does comprise a contract term that applies to said inquiry, including the contract term that applies to said inquiry as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

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8. The method of claim 1, wherein the contract terms associated with a particular one of said plurality of contracts may differ from the contract terms associated with another of said plurality of contracts, and wherein processing said information comprises:

10 reconciling the contract terms associated with said particular one of said plurality of contracts with the contract terms associated with said another of said plurality of contracts to derive said one or more applicable contract terms.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein reconciling comprises:
15 processing said particular one of said plurality of contracts and said another of said plurality of contracts in a particular order,

determining, as each contract is processed, whether that contract has a contract term associated therewith which applies to said inquiry; and

upon finding a first contract term that applies to said inquiry, including said first
20 contract term as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

10. A computer implemented method for managing a contract, comprising:

receiving a first inquiry regarding obtaining a first resource under a particular contract;

accessing information pertaining to said particular contract, said information comprising a quota parameter, which specifies a quota of resources that can be consumed
5 under said particular contract, and one or more contract terms associated with said particular contract;

determining a first amount attributable to obtaining said first resource, said first amount determined, at least partially, by applying one or more of said contract terms;

updating said quota parameter based, at least partially, upon said first amount; and
10 allowing said first resource to be obtained under said particular contract.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein said first resource comprises a product.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein said first resource comprises a service.
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13. The method of claim 10, wherein said first resource comprises a license to a set of property.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein said property comprises intellectual
20 property.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein said property comprises proprietary information.

16. The method of claim 10, wherein said one or more contract terms comprises an uplift.

5 17. The method of claim 10, wherein said one or more contract terms comprises a discount.

18. The method of claim 10, wherein said one or more contract terms comprises a multiplier.

10 19. The method of claim 10, wherein said one or more contract terms specify an additional resource to be included with said first resource.

15 20. The method of claim 10, further comprising:
receiving a second inquiry regarding obtaining a second resource under said particular contract;

accessing said information pertaining to said particular contract;

determining a second amount attributable to obtaining said second resource, said second amount determined, at least partially, by applying one or more of said contract
20 terms;

updating said quota parameter based, at least partially, upon said second amount;
and

allowing said second resource to be obtained under said particular contract.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein said second resource is of a different type than said first resource.

5 22. The method of claim 20, wherein the one or more contract terms applied to determine said first amount are different from the one or more contract terms applied to determine said second amount.

10 23. The method of claim 20, wherein the one or more contract terms applied to determine said first amount are the same as the one or more contract terms applied to determine said second amount.

24. The method of claim 10, wherein updating said quota parameter comprises:

15 reducing said quota parameter by said first amount.

25. The method of claim 10, wherein said first inquiry specifies one or more additional inquiry parameters, and wherein said first amount is determine based, at least partially, upon at least one of said one or more additional inquiry parameters.

20 26. The method of claim 25, wherein at least one of said one or more additional inquiry parameters is specifiable by a sender of said first inquiry.

27. The method of claim 10, wherein said first inquiry specifies a set of additional inquiry parameters, and wherein determining said first amount comprises:

determining, based at least partially upon one or more of said additional inquiry parameters, which of said one or more contract terms to apply to said first inquiry.

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28. The method of claim 10, further comprising:

receiving a request for at least a partial refund of a previously obtained resource;

determining a refund amount; and

updating said quota parameter based, at least partially, upon said refund amount.

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29. The method of claim 28, wherein updating said quota parameter based, at least partially, upon said refund amount comprises:

increasing said quota parameter by said refund amount.

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30. The method of claim 28, wherein said refund amount is determined, at least partially, by applying one or more of said contract terms.

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31. A computer implemented method for managing a contract, comprising:
receiving an inquiry regarding obtaining a resource under a particular contract;
accessing a first set of information pertaining to said particular contract, said first set of information comprising a quota parameter, which specifies a quota of resources that can be consumed under said particular contract, and one or more contract terms associated with said particular contract;

accessing one or more other sets of information pertaining to one or more other contracts related to said particular contract, each of said other sets of information comprising one or more contract terms associated with one of said other contracts;

processing said first set of information and said one or more other sets of
5 information to derive one or more applicable contract terms that apply to said inquiry;

determining an amount attributable to obtaining said resource, said amount determined, at least partially, by applying said one or more applicable contract terms;

updating said quota parameter based, at least partially, upon said amount; and
allowing said resource to be obtained under said particular contract.

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32. The method of claim 31, wherein said one or more applicable contract terms may be derived from said first set of information or from any of said one or more other sets of information.

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33. The method of claim 31, wherein the contract terms associated with each contract may differ, and wherein processing said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information comprises:

reconciling said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information to extract therefrom said one or more applicable contract terms.

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34. The method of claim 33, wherein reconciling comprises:

processing said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information in a particular order;

searching, as each set of information is processed, for a contract term that applies to said inquiry; and

upon finding a first contract term that applies to said inquiry, including said first contract term as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

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35. The method of claim 34, wherein said first contract term may be found in said first set of information, or in any of said one or more other sets of information.

36. The method of claim 31, wherein processing said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information comprises:

determining whether said first set of information comprises a contract term that applies to said inquiry; and

in response to a determination that said first set of information does not comprise a contract term that applies to said inquiry, deriving said one or more applicable contract terms from said one or more other sets of information.

37. The method of claim 36, wherein deriving said one or more applicable contract terms further comprises:

in response to a determination that said first set of information does comprise a contract term that applies to said inquiry, including the contract term that applies to said inquiry as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

38. The method of claim 31, wherein processing said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information comprises:

processing said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information in a particular order;

5 searching, as each set of information is processed, for a contract term that applies to said inquiry; and

upon finding a contract term that applies to said inquiry, including the contract term that applies to said inquiry as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

10 39. The method of claim 38, wherein the contract term that applies to said inquiry may be found in said first set of information, or in any of said one or more other sets of information.

15 40. A computer readable medium comprising instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to manage multiple contracts, said computer-readable medium comprising:

instructions for causing one or more processors to receive an inquiry;

instructions for causing one or more processors to determine a plurality of contracts that are implicated by said inquiry;

20 instructions for causing one or more processors to access information pertaining to said plurality of contracts, said information comprising, for each of said plurality of contracts, a set of one or more associated contract terms;

instructions for causing one or more processors to process said information to select therefrom one or more applicable contract terms that apply to said inquiry; and

instructions for causing one or more processors to process said inquiry based, at least partially, upon said one or more applicable contract terms.

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41. The computer readable medium of claim 40, wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to process said information comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to process each of said plurality of contracts in a particular order,

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instructions for causing one or more processors to determine, as each contract is processed, whether that contract has a contract term associated therewith which applies to said inquiry; and

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instructions for causing one or more processors to, upon finding a first contract term that applies to said inquiry, include said first contract term as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

42. The computer readable medium of claim 40, wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to determine said plurality of contracts comprises:

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instructions for causing one or more processors to determine which particular contract is being invoked by said inquiry; and

instructions for causing one or more processors to determine at least one other contract that is related to said particular contract.

43. The computer readable medium of claim 42, wherein said particular contract and said other contract are related to each other through a hierarchy.

44. The computer readable medium of claim 40, wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to process said information comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to determine whether a set of contract terms associated with said particular contract comprises a contract term that applies to said inquiry; and

instructions for causing one or more processors to, in response to a determination that the set of contract terms associated with said particular contract does not comprise a contract term that applies to said inquiry, determine whether a set of contract terms associated with said other contract comprises a contract term that applies to said inquiry.

45. The computer readable medium of claim 44, wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to process said information further comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to, in response to a determination that the set of contract terms associated with said particular contract does comprise a contract term that applies to said inquiry, include the contract term that applies to said inquiry as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

46. The computer readable medium of claim 44, wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to process said information further comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to, in response to a determination that the set of contract terms associated with said other contract does comprise a contract term that applies to said inquiry, include the contract term that applies to said inquiry as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

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47. The computer readable medium of claim 40, wherein the contract terms associated with a particular one of said plurality of contracts may differ from the contract terms associated with another of said plurality of contracts, and wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to process said information comprises:

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instructions for causing one or more processors to reconcile the contract terms associated with said particular one of said plurality of contracts with the contract terms associated with said another of said plurality of contracts to derive said one or more applicable contract terms.

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48. The computer readable medium of claim 47, wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to reconcile comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to process said particular one of said plurality of contracts and said another of said plurality of contracts in a particular order,

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instructions for causing one or more processors to determine, as each contract is processed, whether that contract has a contract term associated therewith which applies to said inquiry; and

instructions for causing one or more processors to, upon finding a first contract term that applies to said inquiry, include said first contract term as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

5 49. A computer readable medium comprising instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to manage a contract, said computer readable medium comprising:

instructions for causing one or more processors to receive a first inquiry regarding obtaining a first resource under a particular contract;

10 instructions for causing one or more processors to access information pertaining to said particular contract, said information comprising a quota parameter, which specifies a quota of resources that can be consumed under said particular contract, and one or more contract terms associated with said particular contract;

15 instructions for causing one or more processors to determine a first amount attributable to obtaining said first resource, said first amount determined, at least partially, by applying one or more of said contract terms;

instructions for causing one or more processors to update said quota parameter based, at least partially, upon said first amount; and

20 instructions for causing one or more processors to allow said first resource to be obtained under said particular contract.

50. The computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein said first resource comprises a product.

51. The computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein said first resource comprises a service.

5 52. The computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein said first resource comprises a license to a set of property.

53. The computer readable medium of claim 52, wherein said property comprises intellectual property.

10 54. The computer readable medium of claim 52, wherein said property comprises proprietary information.

15 55. The computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein said one or more contract terms comprises an uplift.

56. The computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein said one or more contract terms comprises a discount.

20 57. The computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein said one or more contract terms comprises a multiplier.

58. The computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein said one or more contract terms specify an additional resource to be included with said first resource.

59. The computer readable medium of claim 49, further comprising:

5 instructions for causing one or more processors to receive a second inquiry regarding obtaining a second resource under said particular contract;

instructions for causing one or more processors to access said information pertaining to said particular contract;

10 instructions for causing one or more processors to determine a second amount attributable to obtaining said second resource, said second amount determined, at least partially, by applying one or more of said contract terms;

instructions for causing one or more processors to update said quota parameter based, at least partially, upon said second amount; and

15 instructions for causing one or more processors to allow said second resource to be obtained under said particular contract.

60. The computer readable medium of claim 59, wherein said second resource is of a different type than said first resource.

20 61. The computer readable medium of claim 59, wherein the one or more contract terms applied to determine said first amount are different from the one or more contract terms applied to determine said second amount.

62. The computer readable medium of claim 59, wherein the one or more contract terms applied to determine said first amount are the same as the one or more contract terms applied to determine said second amount.

5 63. The computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to update said quota parameter comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to reduce said quota parameter by said first amount.

10 64. The computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein said first inquiry specifies one or more additional inquiry parameters, and wherein said first amount is determine based, at least partially, upon at least one of said one or more additional inquiry parameters.

15 65. The computer readable medium of claim 64, wherein at least one of said one or more additional inquiry parameters is specifiable by a sender of said first inquiry.

20 66. The computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein said first inquiry specifies a set of additional inquiry parameters, and wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to determine said first amount comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to determine, based at least partially upon one or more of said additional inquiry parameters, which of said one or more contract terms to apply to said first inquiry.

67. The computer readable medium of claim 49, further comprising:
instructions for causing one or more processors to receive a request for at least a
partial refund of a previously obtained resource;
5 instructions for causing one or more processors to determine a refund amount; and
instructions for causing one or more processors to update said quota parameter
based, at least partially, upon said refund amount.

68. The computer readable medium of claim 67, wherein said instructions for
10 causing one or more processors to update said quota parameter based, at least partially,
upon said refund amount comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to increase said quota parameter
by said refund amount.

69. The computer readable medium of claim 67, wherein said refund amount
15 is determined, at least partially, by applying one or more of said contract terms.

70. A computer readable medium comprising instructions which, when
executed by one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to manage a
20 contract, said computer readable medium comprising:

instructions for causing one or more processors to receive an inquiry regarding
obtaining a resource under a particular contract;

instructions for causing one or more processors to access a first set of information pertaining to said particular contract, said first set of information comprising a quota parameter, which specifies a quota of resources that can be consumed under said particular contract, and one or more contract terms associated with said particular

5 contract;

instructions for causing one or more processors to access one or more other sets of information pertaining to one or more other contracts related to said particular contract, each of said other sets of information comprising one or more contract terms associated with one of said other contracts;

10 instructions for causing one or more processors to process said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information to derive one or more applicable contract terms that apply to said inquiry;

instructions for causing one or more processors to determine an amount attributable to obtaining said resource, said amount determined, at least partially, by

15 applying said one or more applicable contract terms;

instructions for causing one or more processors to update said quota parameter based, at least partially, upon said amount; and

instructions for causing one or more processors to allow said resource to be obtained under said particular contract.

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71. The computer readable medium of claim 70, wherein said one or more applicable contract terms may be derived from said first set of information or from any of said one or more other sets of information.

72. The computer readable medium of claim 70, wherein the contract terms associated with each contract may differ, and wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to process said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to reconcile said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information to extract therefrom said one or more applicable contract terms.

73. The computer readable medium of claim 72, wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to reconcile comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to process said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information in a particular order;

instructions for causing one or more processors to search, as each set of information is processed, for a contract term that applies to said inquiry; and

instructions for causing one or more processors to, upon finding a first contract term that applies to said inquiry, include said first contract term as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

74. The computer readable medium of claim 73, wherein said first contract term may be found in said first set of information, or in any of said one or more other sets of information.

75. The computer readable medium of claim 70, wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to process said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to determine whether said first set of information comprises a contract term that applies to said inquiry; and

instructions for causing one or more processors to, in response to a determination that said first set of information does not comprise a contract term that applies to said inquiry, derive said one or more applicable contract terms from said one or more other sets of information.

76. The computer readable medium of claim 75, wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to derive said one or more applicable contract terms further comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to, in response to a determination that said first set of information does comprise a contract term that applies to said inquiry, include the contract term that applies to said inquiry as one of said one or more applicable contract terms.

77. The computer readable medium of claim 70, wherein said instructions for causing one or more processors to process said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information comprises:

instructions for causing one or more processors to process said first set of information and said one or more other sets of information in a particular order;

instructions for causing one or more processors to search, as each set of information is processed, for a contract term that applies to said inquiry; and

instructions for causing one or more processors to, upon finding a contract term that applies to said inquiry, include the contract term that applies to said inquiry as one of

5 said one or more applicable contract terms.

78. The computer readable medium of claim 77, wherein the contract term that applies to said inquiry may be found in said first set of information, or in any of said one or more other sets of information.

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